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**Losing The Ball And Chain
Revolabs Frees You From The Conference Table**

by Jacqueline Bates

maynard, ma—Revolabs' new Solo microphones were originally developed as a solution for a top financial company. It didn't take long for JP Carney, chief operations officer, and Martin Bodley, chief operating officer and president of Revolabs, to see the huge market for their new product. Carney's background is in wireless product design and chipsets, while Bodley had roots in the professional audio headset industry. Although Carney and Bodley's paths had crossed several times, it was their meeting at UMass Amherst for an RF-focused graduate degree that led to the collaboration that created Revolabs. Carney and Bodley both came from the cell phone and consumer electronics industry, thus starting with a firm understanding of the technology they wanted to develop.

Carney reflected on the initial mission of Revolabs: "Marty Bodley originally founded the company on the fact that there are all these wireless protocols out there that are standards. People have done a lot to get these standards built—DECT (Digitally Enhanced Cordless Telephony), WiFi—there are plenty of ISM bands that are world bands now. The idea was to take that technology and make good products available to help people. We went from a wireless development company to making this product as a company."

Bodley tackled the problem of poor audio quality in videoconferencing situations. He realized the shortcoming of table-top microphones—specifically, background noise. The only way to get rid of the ambient noise, keep high quality audio, and allow participants in the conference to move freely was to move the microphone off the table, and towards the participant, and to go wireless.

The Solo concept was born out of the need to convey high quality audio to the receiving end of a conference call. The concept began taking shape three years ago, and the amount of research and development that has gone into the product is impressive.

“In video conference calls, one of the biggest complaints people have is the audio. People tell us that 80 percent of callbacks are not because of video stations but because of the audio. Many companies manufacture very nice video products. The problem is when large amounts of money are paid to install video products, and then people come in there and the other end goes, ‘Gosh, it sounds horrible!’” said Carney. “People don’t say ‘The audio in this room wasn’t built properly,’ or that the acoustics are bad. They look at the video station, and go ‘Ah, that product is horrible.’ End users and video station manufacturers are excited because our product makes their products stronger.”

Revolabs was making Bluetooth headsets as an OEM manufacturer for tier one wireless communications companies to pay the bills, but slowly, the Solo concept was blossoming in the background, bringing the product from idea to reality. It took several years to get the system, the feature set, and the engineered product ready to go.

A major factor in the research was the countless hours spent talking to top players in different industries—law firms, pharmaceutical companies, financial institutions—people who use conferencing in their day to day business to find out what end users really needed in a product. The Solo was really shaped not only from Carney and Bodley’s minds but from the feedback of innumerable people from different sides of the industry. Revolabs worked with internal IT departments as well as people installing the systems, and the end users.

From there, once the feature set was nailed down, they looked at the marketplace. The cost of product development is large and time consuming, and Revolabs wanted to be sure that there was an actual market for the Solo. Revolabs spent a lot of time with the end customers doing work in the marketplace to justify not only the feature set but also that there was a market and that the solution was actually going to fit the need.

There were some issues initially because of Revolabs’ desire to create a product that would plug into a video codec. As the product began to take shape, it became clear that there were too many companies with preexisting systems, and so the Solo became a wireless microphone system that would plug into already installed, existing equipment.

The Revolabs Solo executive microphone system, and desktop microphone system provide the advanced audio capabilities of full duplex, wideband quality, and encryption in a wearable microphone. It was designed to connect seamlessly to existing conferencing equipment from all major manufacturers. The Solo microphone design significantly improves the signal-to-voice ratio performance for users by creating a constant fixed distance from the voice source to the microphone, thereby reducing the impact of noisy conferencing environments without impacting natural meeting dynamics.

The Solo microphone system is an RF product, so no line-of-sight limitations exist.

Conference participants are free to move about the room, or even exit it.

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